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ABSTRACT

Serving as an ideal entry point for children to self-expression and creativity, these participative poems by a storyteller blend the bounce and rhythm of Caribbean memory with universal aspects of childhood experience. The poems take the oral and musical folklore of the Caribbean and link it to the verse of the traditional English nursery rhyme to create a cross-cultural form in a theatrical or educational context. Titles of the poems are: "Waking up with Rhythm on a Winter's Day"; "Poor Mrs. Carnelley!"; "Watch Out Ousman!"; "Kelly-Marie"; "Get on with Your Work Salma"; "Ghost-Buster-Mark"; "Is It Raining Outside?"; "When I Think of Rain"; "English Rain"; "La Pluie Ka Tombe, Soleil Ka Claywe"; "The Puddle"; and "African Dance." A poem evaluating the poetry workshop concludes the book. (NKA)

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JANE GRELL

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Doctor Knickerbocker and other poems

Doctor Knickerbocker and other poems

by
Jane Grell

Illustrated by Derrick Smith

Hawthorn Press

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Foreword

In this book Jane Ulysses Grell has taken the oral and musical folklore of the Caribbean and linked it to the verse of the traditional English nursery rhyme to create a cross-cultural form which has charmed audiences wherever she has appeared. In doing so she is following generations of storytellers on her tropical island home who have handed on their stories through the ages.

Jane was born on Dominica, a lush green mountainous island in the Windward Islands group which makes up the Caribbean chain. The island's culture is a mixture of French, English, African and the indigenous Carib Indian influence. From this has come a rich folk heritage.

In earlier times when there were no radios or imported entertainment, the village communities had several ways of amusing themselves. Along with songs and dancing, storytelling was very popular. On feast days, moonlight nights or during wakes, the favourite storytellers, called *raconteurs* in the Creole patois, would tell the traditional folk tales which were called *contes*. These included rhymes, riddles, music, audience responses and sometimes a little dance so that the *conte* in itself was a multi-faceted performance.

Jane Grell has taken this tradition and adapted it to her work. When we read these rhymed verses we must imagine them in performance lifted from the page, linked to music, spoken and sung so as to conjure mood and movement in the spirit of dramatised poetry. This is how the author uses these and other poems in her performances. She accompanies herself on guitar and applies her repertoire to educational and community programmes with great effect.

Having read these verses and seen Jane Grell in performance I have enjoyed both aspects of these verses, and in witnessing the enthusiastic response of children to her presentations realise the value of her work in enriching educational techniques in a direct and memorable way.

Lennox Honychurch
Department of Ethnology and
Museum Ethnography.
University of Oxford.

Waking up with Rhythm on a Winter's Day

When I awake on a dull and dismal day
With birds silent and skies grey
I pull up my quilt right over my head
And dream up excuses to stay in bed

Soon I feel a stomach ache coming on
A huge lump in my throat
And sometimes even a swollen, small toe blister
all hot and ready to burst
Ooh, I'm in such a lot of pain.

Yet, I'm never too ill to hear mum call out
From the depths of her no-nonsense voice
You-better-get-up-off-this-bed-now
Or-do-I-have-to-come-and.....

Come and what?
I don't wait to hear the rest
'Cause I know my mum
And I know to linger a minute more
Would mean deep, deep trouble
For some unlucky body.
That's when I usually
call on Doctor Knickerbocker
to rescue me.

I would love to sing out loud and clear
Like a gargling echo from a mountain top

Doc-tor-knick-er-bock-er-he.....lp!

But instead I whisper under my breath
in a voice that he couldn't possibly hear

(Whisper)
Doctor Knickerbocker number forty-nine
Sure gets drunk on a bottle of wine

To my great surprise, I hear
"What you say?"
I answer a little louder

Doctor Knickerbocker number forty-nine
Sure gets drunk on a bottle of wine

Again he asks me
"I say, what you say?"
I call out really loudly this time
Doctor Knickerbocker number forty-nine
sure gets drunk on a bottle of wine

And still he insists:
"Would you speak up please
I'm a little deaf!"

Hear me now
Bringing down the roof
with my biggest bassoon voice

Doctor Knickerbocker number forty-nine
Sure gets drunk on a bottle of wine

And sure enough,
In climbs Doctor Knickerbocker
nimble as a flea
Through my bedroom window and busy as a bee
Breathing the rhythm of life into me

First he breathes in the rhythm to my eyes
Wink, wink, blink, blink

Then he breathes in the rhythm to my nose
Sniff, sniff

He breathes in the rhythm to my ears
Waggle, waggle

Then he breathes in the rhythm to my throat
Ahem, ahem

He breathes in the rhythm to my shoulders
Shrug, shrug

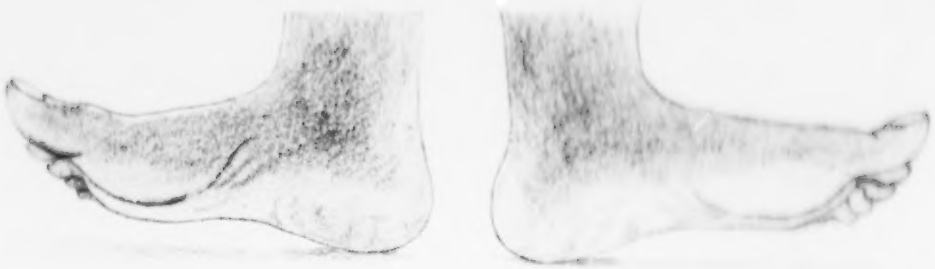
Then he breathes in the rhythm to my hands
Clap, clap

He breathes in the rhythm to my fingers
Click, click

Then he breathes in the rhythm to my tummy
Rumble, rumble

He breathes in the rhythm to my thighs
Slap, slap

Then he breathes in the rhythm to my knees
Knock, knock, Wobble, wobble



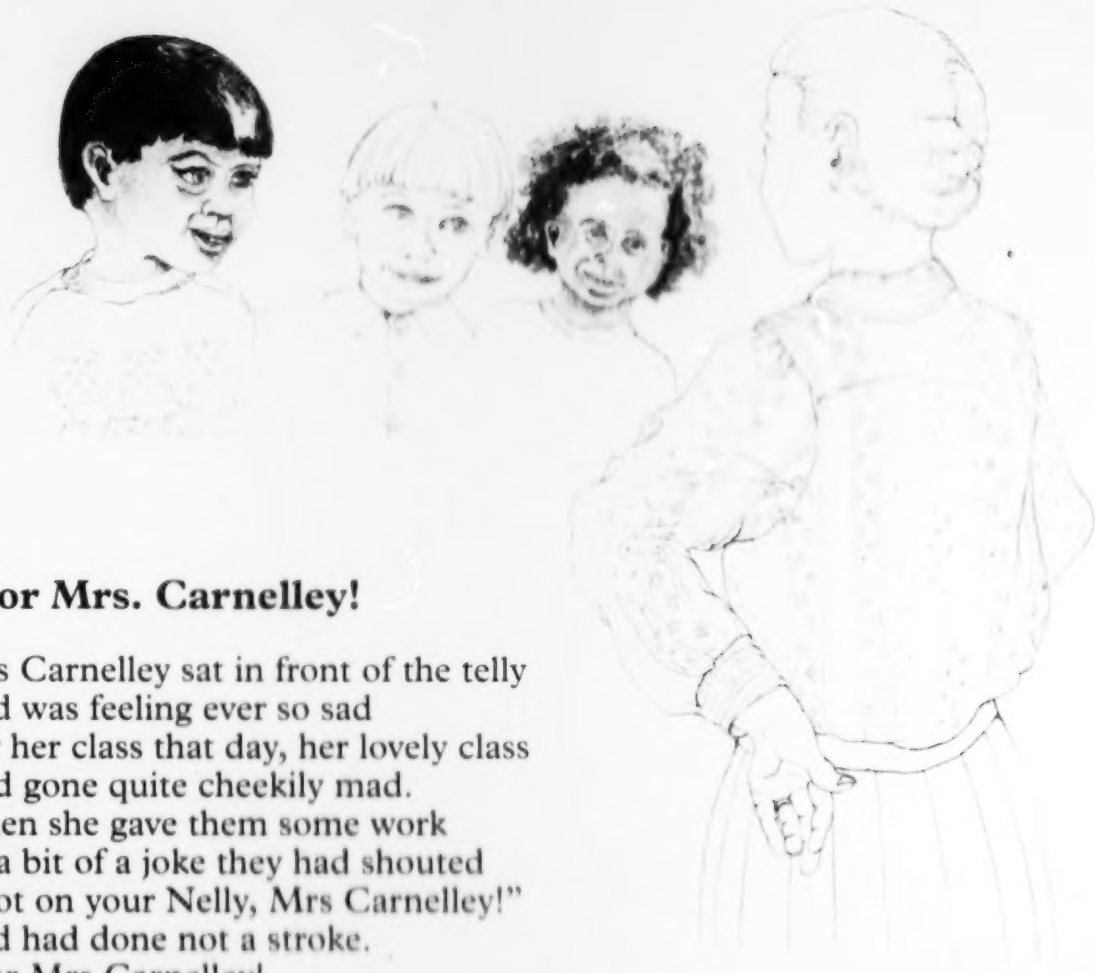
He breathes in the rhythm to my feet
Tap, tap

Then he breathes in the rhythm to my toes
Wiggle, wiggle

He breathes in the rhythm to my hips
(Slowly) Crea-k, crea-k

And finally, he breathes in the rhythm to my arms
(Very slowly) stretch, stretch, stretch, stre-t-ch!

And when I'm really
truly
fully wide awake
Ready to face another school day
Out slips Doctor Knickerbocker
Noiselessly away.



Poor Mrs. Carnelley!

Mrs Carnelley sat in front of the telly
And was feeling ever so sad
For her class that day, her lovely class
Had gone quite cheekily mad.
When she gave them some work
As a bit of a joke they had shouted
"Not on your Nelly, Mrs Carnelley!"
And had done not a stroke.
Poor Mrs Carnelley!

Watch Out Ousman!

When he should be doing his writing
He throws Karate kicks.

When he should be doing his writing
He's busy playing tricks.

When he should be doing his writing
He drags the dustbin in.

When he should be doing his writing
His head's all in a spin.

When he should be doing his writing
He does a little dance.

When he should be doing his writing
He sits there in a trance.

Well Ousman, his teacher says
You've just three minutes to finish your work, or ZUT!

ZUT, Miss, What's ZUT?

Just the sound of your head rolling off, that's all.

Kelly-Marie

Kelly-Marie's a bit of a giggler
Kelly-Marie's a bit of a wiggler
When she giggles she wiggles and wiggles
Her wiggles lead to even more giggles
Lov-a-ly, higgledy, piggledy giggle-ly Kelly-Marie.

Get on with your work Salma

Miss, can I go the loo?
No Salma, get on with your work.

Miss, can I sharpen my pencil?
No Salma, get on with your work.

Please Miss, I've lost my shoe
Never mind Salma, get on with your work.

Miss, I've scratched my face
Don't think about it dear
Just get on with your work.

Miss, I feel sick
Keep this bucket close by dear.
Now do get on with your work.

Miss, Miss, I think I'm going to die
That's quite alright dear
But not-before-you've done-this work!!

Ghost-Buster-Mark

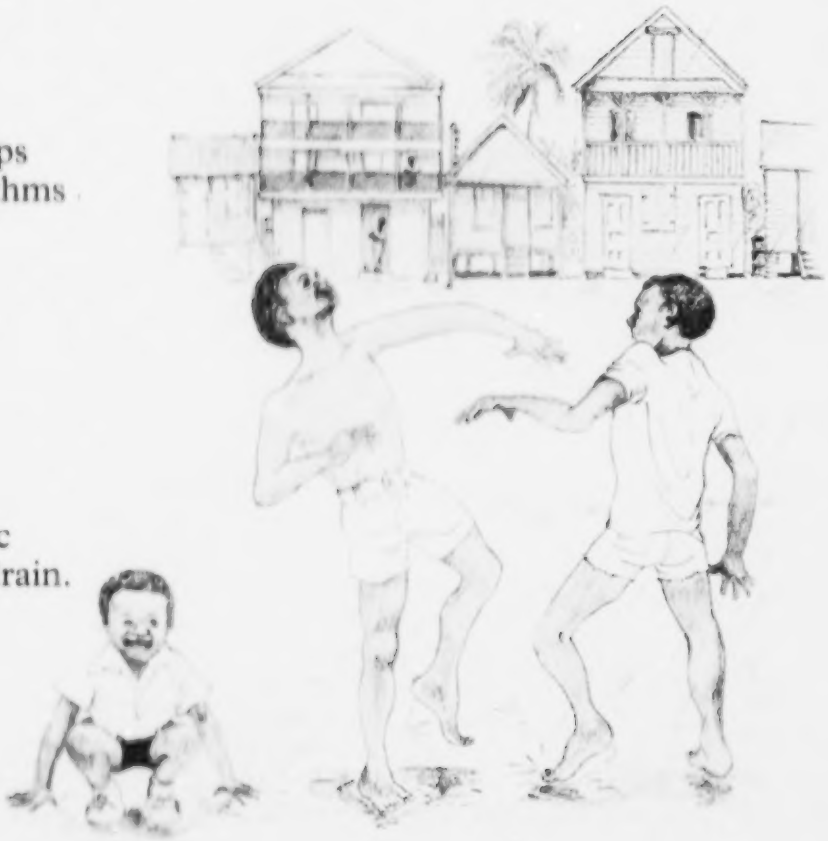
My name is Mark, cheerful Mark.
I like to sit in the park after dark
And scare the ghosts away.
Yes, sit in the park after dark
And frighten the ghosts who come out to play.
Watch out ghostie, I don't know your name
But mine is Mark

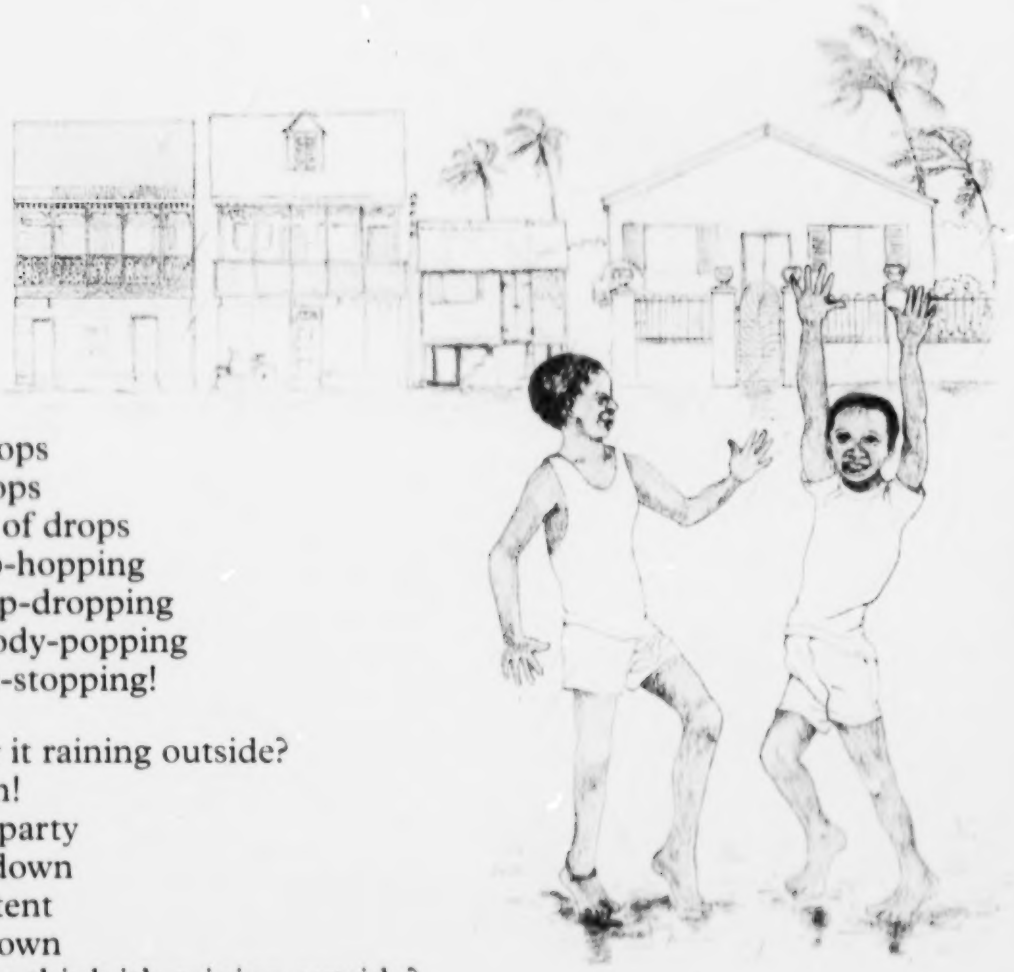
Cheerful but terrible GHOST-BUSTER-MARK.....!!!

Is it raining outside?

Is it raining outside?
Non man!
Is a rain party
coming to town
with a million raindrops
pelting down rain rhythms
to anyone
with ears to hear.

It's raining outside?
Non man!
Is a rainhouse disco
on the move
flooding the streets
with cool, liquid music
gurgling down every drain.





Large drops
small drops
all kinds of drops
some hip-hopping
some drip-dropping
others body-popping
all traffic-stopping!

You hear it raining outside?
Non man!
Is a rain party
coming down
to pitch tent
all over town
and if you think it's raining outside?
Hm! well, you ain't hear nuttin yet.

When I think of rain

When I think of rain,
I think of corn
roasting on a coal fire.

When I think of rain,
I savour the memory
of those unexpected
"no-school" days,
Thanks to shallow streams
Swelled into rivers
Too deep to cross.

When I think of rain
I remember my grandad
Whom I never knew,
Anda was his name,
Drowned in the treacherous belly
of a muddy brown river,
After it had rained and rained.

When I think of rain,
I feel quite drowsy,
So pleasantly cozy,
I tuck in my tail
like a lazy contented cat,
Curl up and go to sleep,
With the sound of the rain
Playing steelband music
Upon my brain.

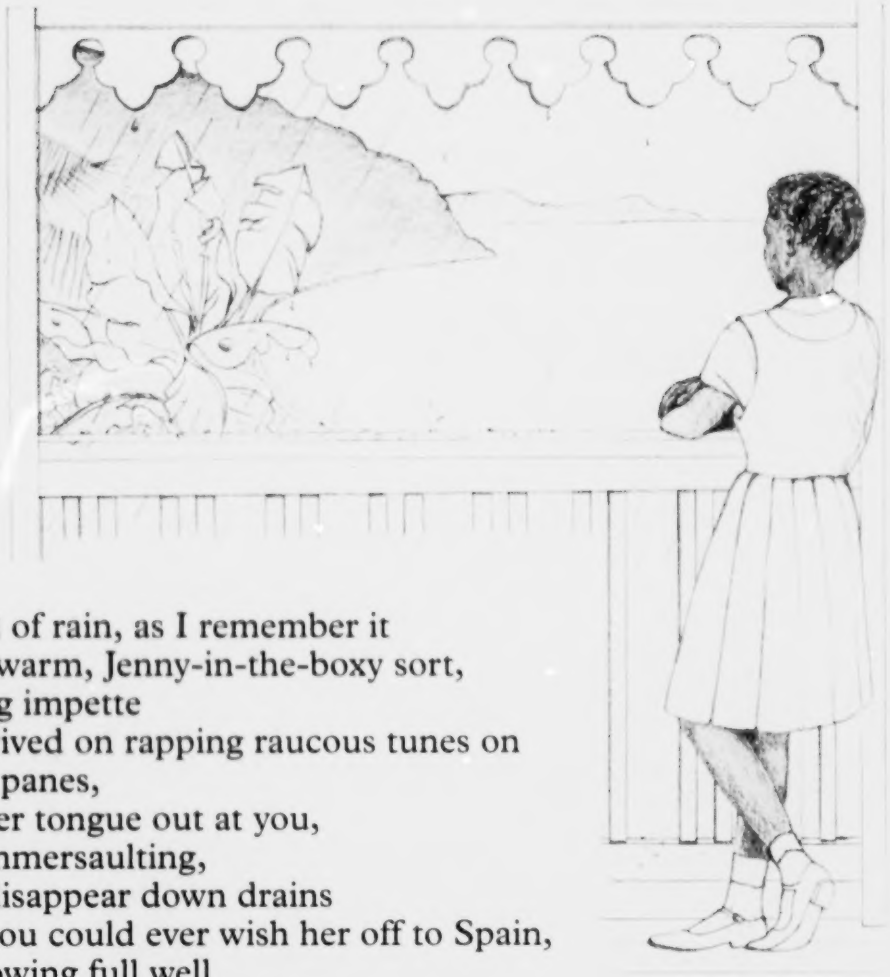
English Rain

I've gotten used to English rain
But I don't like it
Too silent.

I've gotten used to English rain
But I don't like it
Too cold.

I've gotten used to English rain
But I don't like it
Where's its laughter?

I've gotten used to English rain
But find it hard to comprehend
How dull it really is,
Enticing as it does
Nothing but drab macs
A shroud of weeping brollies
squelching boots
and runny noses
pressed upon steamed-up glass
From behind closed doors.



My kind of rain, as I remember it
was the warm, Jenny-in-the-boxy sort,
A teasing impette
Who thrived on rapping raucous tunes on
window panes,
poked her tongue out at you,
And summersaulting,
Would disappear down drains
Before you could ever wish her off to Spain,
And knowing full well
that she would come back again.

La Pluie Ka Tombé, Soleil Ka Claywé (Dominican Créole)

La pluie Ka tombé
Soleil Ka claywé
Diable Ka mayé
Deyer la porte chamme!

Rain falling,
Sun shining,
The devil courting his bride
Take care to shut the back room door,
Quick!
Get indoors and hide.

Silent and invisible,
He'll watch your every move
And this my friend
I know for true.

When rain falling,
Sun shining,
And the devil strolling his wife,
You better just be out of sight
Or it's you,
Your soul,
Or your life!

La pluie Ka tombé
Soleil Ka claywé
Diable Ka mayé
Deyer la porte chamme!

Rain and sun together in the Caribbean means the devil is about.

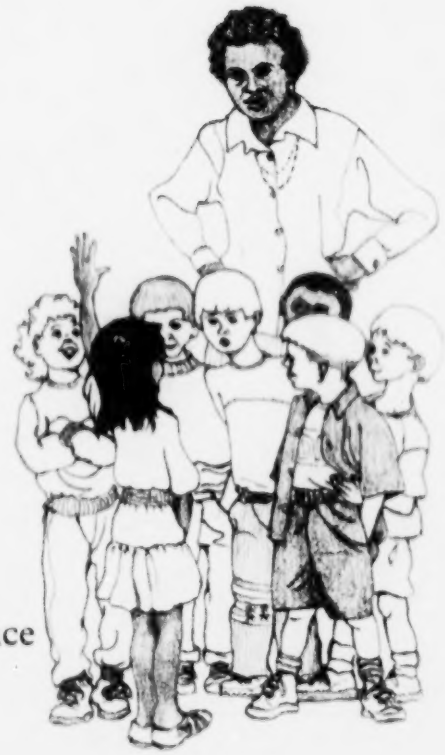
The Puddle

Who can explain this puddle on the carpet
in the middle of the room? I asked
Looking hard at my class of rising fives.

Not me!
Robby offered an uneven, gummy smile
-Dear Robbie always tells the truth

A little hand shot up
A breathless chuckle
You can, Gemima?

Yes Jill
The little red monkey done it
I seed him
Excited titters all round
-This child is as convincing as a fairy tale prince



Yes Nusrat
I hope you can do better than Gemima
I want the truth, mind
-The child is hardly ever awake
I wonder if she's even heard my question

Someone....
Someone peed a puddle....
Yes, go on
Someone peed a puddle from the roof.

Peed-a-puddle-from-the-roof?
This caught the class imagination
Wild shrieks of pure delight

Who could have peed this puddle from the roof,
my dear?
-Despite myself, I had to hear the child out
Get to the bottom of this mys-ter-y.

Nusrat, now fully awake
Comes into her own as she's never done before

She takes the floor
All eyes peeled on her

All necks craned forward
to catch every single drop of this succulent revelation.

God! she declared in clear, matter-of-fact voice.

God peed a puddle from the roof
Only a wee accident, that's all
I'm sure he didn't mean to
We musn't get cross with him
must we Jill?
-Gasps of shock, horror? Well not quite.

The class looked in forgiving mood
It wouldn't do to be outnumbered
and besides
With some imagination
I could easily picture it from Nusrat's point of view
So I did.
and the little matter of the puddle
Has never reared its puny head again.

African Dance

Beat the drum, George
Beat the drum
The children will dance
And I'll play the gong-gong
Watch them dance, George
See them move
No need to slow the beat
They're magic on their feet

Don't fret Africa
Your children's children are intact
Yes, they enslaved their bodies
Stifled their speech
Repressed their thoughts
But their spirits
As slippery as snakes
Escaped
And are roaming free

Weep not Africa
Your children's children are O.K.

For they couldn't stem the flow
Of your rhythm in their blood
They couldn't quell the source
Of your music in their heads
They couldn't stay the power
Of your poetry in their limbs
Made manifest
In the gift of the dance

At ballet they excel
None can equal them at tap
But it's the sound of your drums
Which awaken distant, unknown longings
In their hearts

Spellbound by the voices of your drums
They re-enact vibrations
Centuries old
Echoed over hills and plains
Messages, lost along the way
When the tongues of your drums were stilled

And the hands of your messengers
Bound by scavengers in human trade
Bound for the Middle Passage

Well, they arrived
Those who survived
And today the drums throb on
And their pulses leap
And the strings of their hips
And the soles of their feet come loose
As they respond in the only way they know
To the oh so ancient tune
Of the songs of your drums
Again
And again
And again

Beat the drum George
Beat the drum
I'll play the gong-gong while the
children dance
Beat the drum George
Beat it loud
Now's our chance
I play the gong-gong
So let the children dance!

The Poetry Workshop

A Pupil's evaluation for John Patten

The poetry workshop was brille, Sir
The poetry workshop was cool
The poetry workshop was dead good, Sir
And, not a bit like school.

The poetry workshop was fun, Sir
The poetry workshop was safe
The poetry workshop was such a laugh
'Twas hard to keep a straight face.

Jane Grell came on in jaunty form
John Agard was a scream
Parminder Chadha waxed lyrical
Chandra Chaudhuri danced a dream.

They read them in Bengali
They spoke them in Creole
They recited them in Urdu
And standard English too.

They drummed them from the tabla
They strummed them on guitar
When they danced a poem by Tagore
The audience called for more.

We grabbed our pens
We hit the page
Our poetry flowed like honey
We took the floor
We did our stuff
You would have paid your money.

When I grow up
I want to be a poet of distinction
The free verse type
One not obsessed with syntax and punctuation.

Oh the poetry workshop was wicked, Sir
Good education indeed
And you've got to take my word
you see,
I'm at Key Stage 2,
English Attainment Target 3,
Level 5A to E.

Dedication

These poems are dedicated to:

Eva and Miranda, my very first audience.

The Dominican oral tradition and my aunt Eliza for the love of the music of words.

The English oral tradition and Helen East's book *Look Lively, Rest Easy* for introducing Dr Knickerbocker to me.

Jane Grell – storyteller and poet

Jane Ulysses Grell was born and grew up in Dominica. She now lives and works in Waltham Forest as a teacher. Since 1986 she has developed and used oral storytelling as a teaching style to support the English acquisition of bilingual learners in school. Her brand of storytelling – rhythm games, songs, poetry, stories – is steeped in the rural African-Caribbean oral tradition of her childhood. Her publications include a text book in MacDonald's Young History series *People Then and Now* entitled *A New Life In Britain*; A story in *Time for Telling* – a Kingfisher collection of tales for younger children and in Scholastic's collection of *Tales Myths and Legends* (1993) as well as chapters in *Festivals Together* by Hawthorn Press. She was on the production team of a Humanities Resource pack including a video, produced by the Development Education Team of East Dorset entitled *Dominica, A Small Caribbean Island.*

Jane runs storytelling and poetry workshops for adults and children. She is presently leading a Young Writers club for Secondary aged students in Waltham Forest. She has also worked with BBC School Radio in an Equal Opportunities advisory capacity as well as a writer/presenter of children's programmes.

Derrick Smith

Derrick Smith works as a freelance artist and illustrator in Poole, Dorset. He was trained at Warrington School of Art and Edgehill College in Lancashire, and then taught art in Dorset schools for many years. He has collaborated with Jane Grell before and particularly enjoys illustrating Caribbean themes.

Other books from Hawthorn Press

FESTIVALS TOGETHER

A GUIDE TO MULTI-CULTURAL CELEBRATION

Sue Fitzjohn, Minda Weston, Judy Large.

This is a resource guide for celebration, and for observing special days according to traditions based on many cultures. It brings together the experience, sharing and activities of individuals from a multi-faith community — Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh. It draws on backgrounds as diverse as north and west Africa, the Caribbean, China, India, Ireland, Japan, New England, the Philippines and more. Its unifying thread is our need for meaning, for continuity and for joy.

Festivals Together seeks to enrich and widen our celebration experience and to reflect the 'global village' nature of modern society. As a learning tool or 'just for fun', it offers a creative influence for children today.

Festivals Together is a resource guide which will be of use to every school and family. It has been written with teachers and parents in mind. Sue Fitzjohn is a primary school head and Minda Weston teaches in Widden School, Gloucester. Judy Large is an author of *Festivals, Family and Food.*

Richly illustrated, there is a four page insert of seasonal prints by John Gibbs for your wall.

200 × 250mm; 224pp;
limp bound; colour cover; fully
illustrated; £12.95.
ISBN 1 869 890 46 9

SING ME THE CREATION

Paul Matthews

Introduction by Robert Sardello

This is a workbook of creative writing exercises which can be used by individuals, teachers with students and writing groups. There are over 300 exercises, both 'silly and serious' which provide many ideas for improving writing. Originally designed for group work with adults, teachers will find a multitude of inspirational ideas for the classroom.

Paul Matthews teaches creative writing at Emerson College, Sussex. He travels, giving workshops and poetry readings of his own poems.

Robert Sardello (author of the best-selling *Facing the World With Soul*, concluded his introduction as follows:

"When a rare book such as this is published, one always wonders where it will be put on the shelves of bookstores. It belongs in the self-help section. It also belongs in the section on theology and religion, psychology, spirituality, hermeticism, literature, poetry, art, and humor. The pedantics who have to classify and catalogue are bound to find this work disturbing. In truth, it does not matter where this book is shelved as it is one of those works which will locate its readers rather than readers locating it. This book, I predict, will more or less find its own way into the world, for after all, it has wings."

Richard Ramsbottom, a creative writing teacher, comments on 'Sing Me the Creation':

"I have used a wide variety of books, often by well-known authors, when teaching creative writing in schools and university, but none could *remotely* compare with the ideas and exercises I received from Paul Matthews.... These exercises *work*. 1) They are simple and immediately usable in a class. 2) They all lead to a real creative satisfaction, i.e. they are practically imaginative."

135 × 238mm; 226pp; colour cover, black & white illustrations, paperback £10.95
ISBN 1 869 890 60 4

THE CHILDREN'S YEAR

CRAFTS AND CLOTHES FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS TO MAKE

Stephanie Cooper, Christine Fynes-Clinton and Marÿe Rowling.

You needn't be an experienced craftsperson to create beautiful things! This charmingly illustrated book encourages children and adults to try all sorts of different handwork, with different projects relating to the seasons of the year. Over 100 potential treasures are described, including toys and games from all sorts of natural materials, decorations and even children's clothes.

200 × 250mm; 220pp; illustrated; sewn limp bound; £8.95.
ISBN 1 869 890 00 0

FESTIVALS, FAMILY AND FOOD

Diana Carey and Judy Large.

This is a resource book for exploring the festivals — those 'feast days' scattered round the year which children love celebrating. It was written in response to children and busy parents asking, "What can we do at Christmas and Easter? What games can we play? What can we make?"

Packed full of ideas on things to do, food to make, songs to sing and games to play, it's an invaluable resources book designed to help you and your family celebrate the various festival days scattered round the year. The Observer.

200 × 250mm; 216pp; limp bound; colour cover; fully illustrated; £9.95.
ISBN 0 950 706 23 X

Orders

If you have difficulties ordering from a bookshop, you can order direct from:
Hawthorn Press, Hawthorn House,
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United Kingdom. GL5 1BJ

Telephone (0453) 757040.

DOCTOR KNICKERBOCKER AND OTHER POEMS

JANE GRELL

Illustrations by Derrick Smith

This is a book with a difference. Storyteller Jane Grell's first book of participative poetry for children and others of all ages! Jane blends the bounce, rhythm and depth of Caribbean memory with universal aspects of childhood experience, giving us a variety of poems which touch, enthuse and inspire.

Meet Dr Knickerbocker, the answer to **Waking up with Rhythm on a Winter's Day.** Smile with **Kelly Marie,** enjoy sensitive comedy with **The Puddle,** and feel the even but heart-felt poignancy of **African Dance.** From the Dominican Créole **La Pluie Ka Tombé, Soleil Ka Claywé,** to the very western **Ghost-Buster-Mark,** these are poems you will remember and return to again and again.

Moreover, they are an ideal entry point for children to self-expression and creativity.

"Even some of the children who are very reluctant writers were motivated by the enjoyment and fresh presentation of poetry..."

Anne Peters, Language Co-ordinator,
South Grove Primary School, Walthamstow, London.

"I liked the illustrations and when she read the poems I kept thinking of the feelings, what it would be like living there."

Mobola, Year 6, Edinburgh School, Walthamstow.

"In this book Jane Ulysses Grell has taken the oral and musical folklore of the Caribbean and linked it to the verse of the traditional English nursery rhyme to create a cross-cultural form which has charmed audiences wherever she has appeared. In doing so she is following generations of storytellers on her tropical island home who have handed on their stories through the ages... enriching educational techniques in a direct and memorable way."

Lennox Honychurch, Department of Ethnology,
University of Oxford.

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